Geo-Politics of South Asian Covert Action
India's Experience and Need for Action Against Pakistan Dr Bhashyam Kasturi and Pankaj Mehra*

Intelligence organisations the world over require means of getting information using covert methods. While it is possible for nations to get information, at times active measures become necessary to achieve certain foreign policy objectives. For this purpose, intelligence organisations undertake covert action, which involve intervention in a variety of clandestine ways in the internal affairs of other nations. Such operations, often called covert or special missions, involve carrying out clandestine missions, ranging from pro-insurgency, insurgency, sabotage and deception to, political assassination and political subversion. Missions often encompass the whole spectrum of activity from para-military to military operations, at times even the overthrow of governments.

Covert action (CA) is separate from covert intelligence gathering. The difference is that the latter involves clandestine gathering of information in enemy territory using human or technical means, by activity that the enemy is not aware of. Covert action is employed to influence politics and events in another country without revealing one's involvement or at least while maintaining plausible deniability.

Covert action is an important tool for policy makers seeking an alternative between the application of large-scale military force and sitting quiet when confronted by a foreign policy challenge or when opportunities arise to further national interests and goals. For this purpose, intelligence agencies have separate units or organisations to undertake special missions. In a way, covert political action is an extension of foreign policy. If properly coordinated and controlled, such action can have results out of proportion to the inputs. For instance, India's support to the Mukti Bahini preceding the Bangladesh war gave it an advantage in terms of information flow and in aiding the advance of Indian troops during actual military operations after 3 December 1971. It also provided the base for the creation of Bangladesh.

Nations undertake covert operations based on their peace and wartime needs. The former USSR and US carried out such missions during the Cold War to fulfil their goals. Both the superpowers have organisations specialising in such activity, which pursue pro-insurgency, political assassination and subversion to suit their national interests. The Sandinista experience, the Iran-Contra affair, and the Bay of Pigs operations come to mind when discussing such type of missions. In the US, the period from the 40s to 60s saw a strong consensus concerning the need for covert action. Opposition to covert action began during the Congressional investigations in the mid-1970. Since then classic covert action has reduced considerably and congressional oversight ensures the CIA does not act on its own.

CA can be broadly found to be in five forms; Propaganda; Political action; Para-military assistance; coup d' etat and, secret intelligence support. Perhaps the most telling comment on CA was made by a former chief of the CIA, Admiral Stansfield Turner who

says "Only do covertly that which if it is exposed will cause you little political harm."[1] To this end it is important that covert action be carried out with the aim that it has certain plausible deniability.

It may well be argued that democratic states should not exercise the CA option. But instruments of statecraft, whether covert or overt can be used to achieve objectives that are vital for national security. In this sense, nations can find the way to blend strategic interest and democratic norms to protect vital interests. In India's case, foreign policy has the long-term vision of living in peace with its neighbours and does not seek relations to be held hostage on singular issues as it is with Pakistan. Which is why India's world vision is expansive and seeks to foster cooperation rather than confrontation. Within this paradigm it is necessary to view relations with Pakistan.

It is argued in this analysis that India's experience suggests undertaking covert action has not always been to fulfil foreign policy goals or to serve vital national interests. Secondly, it is perceived that inadequate covert action has been undertaken against Pakistan, enough to dissuade it from engaging in a proxy war with India. This is an essential part of the politics of persuasion that India must engage in, if it is to realise a meaningful dialogue with Pakistan.
The reason why covert action by India in other countries has not been so effective is because more often than not clear directives are not forthcoming for the objectives with which covert action is to be undertaken. Also due to the autonomous nature of agencies engaged in such activity, and changing political equations it is not possible to sustain covert action.

In a few cases, there has been links between foreign policy and operations undertaken to further national security goals, like in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. This paper studies the role of Indian intelligence in utilising this asset to further national goals. Its links to foreign policy and the national executive are also examined. The Indian experience in undertaking covert action has been mixed; this is due to the varying politico-military objectives and level of coordination with institutions that determine policy.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first section narrates the Indian experience of covert operations in various parts of the South Asian region. It also provides inputs on some missions undertaken by other agencies.

Part two outlines a strategy for India in engaging in covert action against Pakistan. It is suggested here that India must undertake active and passive covert operations against Pakistan with the objective of breaking the stronghold of the army, bureaucracy and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) on Pakistani society. There is a belief that covert action against Pakistan could lead to the break-up of an already anarchic state, but Indian aims must be focused on breaking the stranglehold of the army, ISI and bureaucracy in Pakistan. This could have two effects. By playing the Pak game in their own backyard, it would keep them occupied and perhaps take attention away from India.

Alternatively, it could force them to re-think strategies, vis-à-vis the region, including

Afghanistan and create circumstances for a new diplomatic initiative with India. There is always the worst-case situation where a special forces strike by India on mujahid training camps across the LoC could lead to a war, but this eventuality India must be prepared for.

India's experience of covert action

Intelligence agencies have undertaken covert operations, independently and in cooperation with agencies of other countries. The Intelligence Bureau (IB), Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and Military Intelligence (MI) have undertaken operations covertly with certain objectives. These have been low grade and little has been achieved. In the present context, the focus is on operations conducted by India's external intelligence agency, R&AW, termed as RAW for this paper.

India, in the late 50s and 60s with the help of the CIA aided the Tibetan rebellion, providing training facilities in India. The 1962 border war with China led to the establishment of several organisations that are today under the Cabinet Secretariat, the Special Frontier Force (Establishment 22 at Chakrata) and Special Services Bureau. Additionally, a group was raised with the objective of carrying out aerial reconnaissance of China and Tibet, the Aviation Research Centre (ARC). One source suggests that at Charbatia in December 1964 a U-2 aircraft was deployed for operations over Tibet. The Tibet operation continued till the early 60s when the CIA, withdrew its operations on Indian soil and moved to Nepal.[2]

The Tibetan rebellion against the Chinese forces and Indian help straddled an era of post-colonial assertion of non-alignment as the major plank of foreign policy, and yet Jawaharlal Nehru chose to engage in covert action as a foreign policy tool knowing fully well, that India could do little for Tibet. He was keen to have friendly relations with China, but he still believed, like the British did, that a Tibet with an identity was important for sub-continental India. The question may well ask if this policy did not contradict the policy of non-alignment? Possibly yes, but in Nehru's mind, the best way of dealing with the Chinese was diplomatic, and towards this end he was even willing to sponsor China's candidature to the UN. The help given to the Tibetans was probably a small cog in the larger worldview and helping the US in this was a part of geo-politics of the time. This did of course have the adverse effect of changing Chinese perceptions about India. All this is of course based on the scanty evidence that is available in different sources but this is important to suggest directions of discourse in order to dilate on the foreign policy angle to covert operations.

Then in the late sixties, the need for an organisation tasked with gathering external intelligence led to the formation of RAW, and the Directorate General of Security was transferred from IB to RAW. As the Bangladesh crisis arose, RAW was given the task of gathering intelligence and undertaking covert missions, including pro-insurgency. This is the most successful operation till date, publicly written about, carried out, involving the training of the Mukti Bahini of East Pakistan and their role in helping the Indian military intervention.

The operation involved getting the freedom fighters in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) together and training and arming them. This was essentially a Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) operation, with the Indian army providing the training infrastructure. The Mukti Bahini was formed in January 1971 and for the next ten months people who came across the border were selected for training. By September-November 1971, these forces were infiltrated into East Pakistan for covert missions, including sabotage of lines of communication and command and control centres.[3]

When war did officially break out on 3 December, the Mukti Bahini was ready, (just like the French resistance in 1944, when Operation Overlord the invasion at Normandy began). The Mukti Bahini helped Indian troops find their way, harassed Pak troops and generally made itself a nuisance. Naval Mukti Bahini divers planted mines in the harbours around Bangladesh and sunk many merchant and warships, playing a crucial role in blockading the ports. Another facet of covert action was witnessed in the trans border attacks carried out by the Special Frontier Force (SFF) in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Thus a combination of para-military action in the form of the Mukti Bahini and direct covert action using special forces, complimented the main military action in the 1971 Bangladesh war. The benefits accruing from coordinated covert action allowed implementation of foreign policy to secure national interests namely liberation of East Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh.[4]

Subsequently measures taken to integrate Sikkim into the Indian Union by the RAW proved crucial. One authority states that RAW performed the task of counter-intelligence in Sikkim preventing foreign agencies from getting a foothold in the sensitive Himalayan kingdom and allowing it to accede to India.[5] But soon after the successful mounting of Bangladesh and Sikkim operation, leading to the latter's integration as a state in the Indian union, came the Sri Lanka operation. This pro-insurgency operation launched by Mrs Gandhi during her second term in office, meant to train Tamil separatists followed the same lines of the 1971 case. Equipping and training of insurgents from across the Palk Straits took place on Indian soil, in the state of Tamil Nadu and in places as far as, Chakrata and Dehradun. With the active support of the state and central government, Indian intelligence agencies took up the task with gusto. But what was missing was the broad institutional oversight so essential for tying up the loose ends. Foreign policy makers and defence planners were scarcely aware of what was happening as political masters changed and priorities shifted.[6]

Former foreign secretary JN Dixit covertly has identified the reasons for India getting involved in Sri Lanka. He says Mrs Gandhi was aware that all political parties in Tamil Nadu were sympathetic to the aspirations of Sri Lanka Tamils. Therefore extending support to Sri Lanka Tamil parties and Tamil militant groups from 1980 onwards was a natural corollary. There was also the security factor, Sri Lanka getting Israeli and US military personnel to train its own army and para-military. And there was the VoA station in Trincomalee. India perceived this to be an opening for US strategic presence in South Asia. These factors created the conditions for Indian covert intervention in Sri Lanka.[7] The main point was that Mrs Gandhi did not like J Jayawardhane, for his policies and thus

began Operation Sri Lanka.

Secrecy is undoubtedly called for in operations of this sort. But as the Iran-Contra affair in America showed, in the Sri Lanka operations also one part of the government did not know what the other was doing. In the Indian case, while RAW knew what it was doing politically, neither it nor the government was unable to fathom the potential for trouble that was generated by this operation. This was because the mission sought to achieve too much at one time. The number of groups being trained were one too many and difficult to control. No accountability existed and eventually not enough attention was paid to the risks of losing control over the insurgents. Thus by the time Mrs Indira Gandhi was killed in 1984, and Rajiv became prime minister the priorities changed and so did policy towards Sri Lanka.

In politico-military terms, covert action eventually proved to be of little use when the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) went into Sri Lanka in 1987. For the simple reason that intelligence on the insurgents trained by India was not forthcoming. Additionally, the intelligence agencies continued to covertly continue political dealings with the insurgents to suit their ends, even during the IPKF's stay in Sri Lanka. This undermined the foreign policy goal of sending a peacekeeping force to restore peace in Sri Lanka. The problem was that too many prime ministers were involved in the Sri Lanka episode, resulting in several conflicting decisions. Also involvement of state leaders like MG Ramachandran created more complications for command and control.

Intelligence agencies have been involved in various covert acts, both within India and in the surrounding region. Intelligence agencies often make alliances and then forget to inform their cousins resulting in confusion. In February 1998, the Armed Forces intercepted ships at sea off the Andamans killing six people and arresting 73 others. This was essentially a "sting" operation carried out by MI in collaboration with their Burmese counterparts. But the result was a big hue and cry.

In April, the leader of the National Unity Party of Arakans (NUPA) wrote to the Defence Minister that the men abroad the ship were in fact Arakanese revolutionaries who were cooperating with the Indians. He wrote, "The Indian military intelligence had okayed our voyage and that is why we entered Indian territorial waters to avoid the Burmese Navy." The issue is whether it was a case of military intelligence not giving the information to its forces in the field in time or it was a case of giving up its people. Maung wrote, "We were cooperating with each other. The Indians asked us for help to track down gunrunners carrying weapons to Northeast India and we helped them. So it came as a shock to us that our ship, about which the Indians were given full information, should be attacked."[8] The point here is that at one
level India is willing to help the pro-democracy movement in Burma, but due to the insurgents buying arms from South-East Asia and this having a direct influence on the insurgent movement in India's north east it becomes necessary for the army to curb such activity. The dichotomy in policy towards the region is a reflection of the lack of understanding how to secure vital interests in the north-east.

It needs recalling that in the 80s, RAW supported tribal and ethnic factions fighting the SLORC in Myanmar. One of the factions supported by India was the Kachin Independence Army. The Kachins, known more accurately as Jingphaws or Marus, account for some 3 per cent of Myanmar's ethnic population. They inhabit the north-east of the country and have the reputation for resorting to arms to assert what they believe are their rights.

A senior officer in RAW deputed to Bangkok in the 80s, made contact with Burmese underground leaders in the hope of gaining some information. Then this officer decided that the KIA could be beneficially used to channelise information. And RAW could aid them with money and arms. Having made contact, the idea was to get members of KIA into India for training and contact creation. After the controlling officer returned from Bangkok, infiltration of KIA cadres was started. They came as students, youths touring India and helpers, sent for training to Chakrata and other locations in north and north-east. Arms and other material began to filter through to camps in North Myanmar and this reached its peak in 1991-92. Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram provided exfiltration sites, while some material went via Bangkok. This was the post election period when Aung Sang Suu Kyi had won but was not allowed to take power by SLORC.[9] All this was stopped by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, as part of his "Look East" policy.

Looking back, one may well ask what purpose did this operation serve? What national interests or foreign policy goals did it serve? Keeping in mind the dimension of policy in the 80s, that of coercive diplomacy there is little doubt that the Government thought it fit to aid all rebels across the borders, wherever it suited us. But on many an occasion it backfired, as it did in Sri Lanka.

There is one other aspect of covert action that requires highlighting in the present study. Nation-states also engage in action within the territorial confines of the country for politico-military aims, such as pro insurgency or counter-insurgency or counter-terrorism. Since the institutional framework for covert action exists in most countries in the South Asian region, indulging in domestic covert action is a continuing tool for governments. In India for instance, it was suggested that SSB was used to raise and train the Bodos in the late 80s in an effort to counter other groups in the region. Their employment to fulfil political goals has affected their organisation and performance and impinges on their role, which is really to engage in "stay-behind" operations.[10]

It has been often suggested that RAW should function as efficiently as Pakistan's ISI. In fact both India and Pakistan accuse each other of encouraging subversion through their intelligence agencies. ISI's activities in India get greater media coverage than RAW's activities in Pakistan. The latter seems to lack the intensity of operations in Pakistan to counter or duplicate ISI's activities in India.

The ISI has been involved in covert action in various parts of India since the 80s. The main focus has been on Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir. Infiltration of arms and drugs into India, along with men to stoke insurgencies has been common. For Jammu & Kashmir, the ISI has a special cell to fuel the insurgency. It has been responsible for the setting up and maintenance of training camps in POK and Pakistan, the provision of arms and

equipment, infiltration and exfiltration of both recruits and trained militants into the Valley. The entire plan to infiltrate Kashmir and launch a covert low-intensity war there has been described in the part fact, part fictionalised Operation Topac in 1989. The Pak strategy has followed the lines suggested in this analysis.[11]

Op Topac visualised a three-phased strategy in Kashmir. First, fuelling of a low-level insurgency in the Valley. Next, attacks on military and infiltration of mujahids and other special forces for strikes and attacks on soft targets. And then finally, to liberate Kashmir.

The Kashmir operation was an offshoot of the US-Pakistan fight against Soviet Union. The CIA backed the Mujahadeen, via the ISI. The latter siphoned off money and weapons meant for Afghanistan to stoke the insurgency in Kashmir. But infiltration into the Valley has been taking place on a low key since the early eighties, first of Kashmiris who were alienated from India and currently of Pak mercenaries, including criminals and foreign soldiers of fortune from Afghanistan and further afield. This occurred through training camps in POK and Pakistan proper.

The enormous powers enjoyed by ISI were brought to the notice of Robert Gates in May 1990 on a visit to India and Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto apparently expressed her helplessness to Gates, in controlling the training camps run by ISI in POK and Afghanistan used for anti-India operations. Even accounting for an element of exaggeration, the illustration speaks much for the ISI's independence. Being a military controlled organisation, covert operations are tightly controlled. A more recent statement by Benazir Bhutto portrays an intelligence operation that has run amok and that one wields enormous power within Pakistan.[12]
The Indian case is slightly different in terms of the methods of control. In theory there are levels of civilian control, but in practice agencies like RAW function in their own spheres of influence. If proper command and control had been established with clear political objectives the Sri Lanka operations would have been better tasked. All covert operations, both domestic and foreign require political clearance, but covert intelligence activity can be decided upon by the chief of RAW. Here too, the authority of the Prime Minister is needed if the intelligence gathering is done in a friendly country.[13] The chain of command in the case of RAW is Special Services Bureau/Special Frontier Force through to the Directorate General of Security and Secretary (R), in the Cabinet Secretariat, who reports to the Prime Minister.

Most intelligence organisations the world over have a department or section for active measures. Recruitment and training is often based on special operations lines involving, parachuting, electronics, weapons and languages. Area orientation and mobility along with, light but powerful weaponry for fire fighting is essential for covert operations teams. The use of covert action to support national foreign and security policy has been commonplace amongst intelligence agencies round the world. Their success or failure has often depended on the command and control, and the level of involvement of political controllers. India's experience shows that results have often been positive when proper attention was paid to proper control and coordination. When this has not been possible

misuse of covert assets has taken place. This combined with the duplication of covert efforts has reduced the impact of such action on national security.

Covert operations against Pakistan

India has limited experience of covert operations against its western neighbour. Clandestine electronic intelligence gathering and aerial reconnaissance gives it some part of the picture. Additionally, it has gained experience in exfiltrating agents into POK into the training camps and this has helped in keeping tabs on activity in the POK region. But India's ability to influence events in Pakistan itself is limited. Small-scale moral and material support does go out to ethnic groups in Pakistan and some effort is made to infiltrate 'spies' by Military Intelligence in the border regions. But the larger picture is still dependent on Technical/electronic intelligence and even here capability to tap landlines in Pakistan is limited. Human intelligence from within Pakistan is much less than required.[14] It is however suggested by one source on the Internet that RAW has over 35,000 agents in Pakistan.[15]

Therefore, plans have to be made to covertly gather intelligence from inside Pakistan to help in foreign policy objective of breaking the monopoly of the ISI and army over Pakistan. India has to have a plan of action to destabilise Pakistan, its economy and society, to the extent that it gives us leverage in foreign policy terms. It must however, be clear that it is not in India's interests to have a disintegrated Pakistan. The aim is to break the stranglehold of the intelligence agencies, the bureaucracy and the military in Pakistan.

The proposed strategy is to undertake covert passive and active measures against Pakistan including, *psy. ops,* disinformation, strikes in rear areas, border raids and so on. The last may include strikes by special forces against training camps in POK and Northern Areas. Such operations require a clear national will and motivation. They also require sustained funding from the political leadership and it requires highly trained and motivated manpower to execute this task. *The objectives of such operations are to first, penetrate Pakistani society and its institutions of power. Obtaining intelligence from within the establishments of power is the main aim. Associated with this is the second, long-term aim of breaking the stranglehold of the main power brokers in Pakistan.*

For the above mission, there is a need to create, to start with two sets of teams. First, a plans section and second, an operations section. The first will draw up the plans and stages for operations against Pakistan. Also recruiting agents for the task and training them should be completed in about six months. Planning from conception to actual operations should take 8-12 months, depending on the resources and manpower available. Once this is achieved the operations begin.

The operation can be politically cleared by RAW and then a separate section can be raised under the Director RAW, drawing the best talent from within and other agencies including the army, all volunteers of course. Known as Plans Directorate (PD), this will mastermind the operation. Personnel for Strike Directorate (SD) should be picked from SSB, Army para-

commandos and NSG. For the agents and sleepers recruitment has to be from outside. The need to know principle has to be strictly followed. Accountability should be from Prime Minister, National Security Advisor, to Director RAW and to PD head.

The entire operation can be divided into three phases. First phase is penetration and setting up of networks. Second phase is to begin operations in rear areas. Strikes against soft targets in Sind, Baluchistan and Northern Areas. These will make the enemy react and make them sensitive.

The main aim is to infiltrate and subvert Pak institutions, the police, communication network and other important organisations. To this end, it makes sense to penetrate Pakistan from two sides, from outside the sub-continent and from POK. Then, in the next stage, focus moves to organising and training subversive elements. These groups would target communication and logistic lines inside POK. Threatening the Mangla dam or Kahuta for instance, would be a major psychological factor. Third phase is hitting hard targets. First, to carry out disinformation campaign carried out by agent provocateurs and others. A few expendable agents are used to plant false information on police and intelligence agencies. At this stage, the strike teams begin hitting hard targets like economic centres, financial markets (like Karachi), ports and the like. Military installations like ammunition dumps, communication centres, airfields can be targeted in case a war breaks out. Otherwise the aim is to penetrate and gather intelligence with the intention of breaking the stranglehold of the military over Pakistan society.

The mission entails sending two teams of men (and women) into Pakistan for two separate missions. This first team will consist of sleepers, and agent provocateurs, and the second team will be the strike force. The sleepers and agents will consist of network builders and specialists who will recruit local people for both disinformation and strikes in the rear areas of Pakistan. The agent provocateurs will be placed such that they can engage in disinformation and activate sources within who can be expendable when required. The second team is for strikes against key targets of economic and military importance.

Both teams will have to be infiltrated on the basis of genuine documents and placements in Pakistan. Identities can range from middle level social workers, journalists and political workers. Crucially, the persons selected for this job will have to be extensively trained for operations in living off the land in Pakistan. One may at this stage refer to the operation conducted by the Israeli Mossad in Syria aimed at the KHAD party. The agent was an Israeli but was trained to behave and live like a Muslim.[16] Therefore it should not be difficult to train an Indian, Hindu or Muslim to live in Pakistan. The key lies in creating excellent and plausible identities. Training has to be rigorous and thorough. Training will also be common initially and then separate and compartmentalised for the two teams - one, sleepers and agent provocateurs and two, demolition teams that will serve as strike teams in the rear.

While both teams need training in explosives, weapons and communications, each has a

specific role, which calls for intensive training. For the sleeper the aim is to penetrate Pakistani society and build a local network for further infiltration. The important thing is therefore for these members to be 'Islamised.' For the strike teams it is going further afield, into Sind, Baluchistan and Northern Areas. This means differing identities and covers; identities are important. The first team has to consist of "Pakistani nationals." Punjabi or Sindhis, who are from abroad, can be targeted. Some thought can be given to recruiting people from the Asian community in UK. Some members can be selected from Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan. For those coming in from the west, penetration point is obviously the United Kingdom, USA or Europe. Even the Middle East can be used. In other words, the potential areas for recruitment are large and this needs to be analysed carefully.

The strike teams could penetrate from Afghanistan or Tajikistan. The NWFP is full of Afghan refugees and the Northern Areas have Turks, Tajiks and Uzbeks. Finding these persons who are reliable and capable is going to be the tough part, but not impossible.

Another option is to exfiltrate these teams from Indian soil. Therefore, the strike teams could penetrate from northern Kashmir. The northern areas of Jammu & Kashmir bordering Gilgit and Baltistan, mainly Kargil is a Shia dominated region, this could also serve as a recruiting base. There are also traditional routes that could be used for exfiltration into POK. Additionally, India can find local recruits from amongst the Turks and Tajiks in these regions who could act as couriers and informants. Similarly, in POK the Gujjars and Bakkarwals can be recruited for the same purpose. Seasonal migrants and sheepherders come from the Northern Areas, Chitral and Koistan areas. They can also be recruited. The aim of penetrating the strike teams is to get them to strike in the rear areas of Pakistan. The entire infiltration process of both teams, will take at least one year. Then it is a slow task of making inroads into Pak society.

So it is clear that mission objectives of both teams are different and require different infiltration and exfiltration routes. As suggested above, the first team cannot jump off from India; the second might, given the right circumstances. The sleepers and agent provocateurs are always in danger of exposure. Thus their exfiltration will depend on their own resources and on the overall command and control of the mission. If mission control did want to abandon the task, then alternative exfilitration routes will require to be planned. The strike teams consisting of individuals, usually two to four must have routes of escape, and this is possible in those areas bordering India. It is thought best, diplomatically, at some stage to use Tajikistan as the exfilitration route for those employed in the Northern Areas and surrounding regions. Those in Baluchistan, Sind and NWFP will have to use Afghanistan or get to the Arabian Sea for exfiltration.

The first team should consist of 10-20 persons, both men and women who will be sent to Islamabad, Karachi, Rawalpindi and Lahore. The second team, consisting of only men will go to towns in Sind, Baluchistan and NWFP, as also the areas of Gilgit and Chitral. Numbers will depend on how much rear area attack is envisaged, perhaps initial numbers may be 8-10 in groups of two, to each region. The entire operation has to be planned

keeping in mind that the initial period of infiltration and consolidation should be about four-six months. And then once the strike teams have got into place, situations can be created.

The aim of the first team is to settle in Pakistan, infiltrate society, make inroads and build networks for information gathering and find niches in high places. The agent provocateurs will be expendable and need to be locally recruited, though for the sake of authenticity, one or two sleepers need to be expendable also. Key areas of penetration are the bureaucracy, the army, ISI, elite middle class and media. After a lull of a year, information should be leaked, through available means of the existence of these agent provocateurs, who will have in their possession, propaganda material, disinformation material and generally stories that lull Pakistani intelligence into a sense of complacency that they have achieved a coup. Further, as the Russians so successfully did with the CIA and MI-6, the agent provocateurs should talk of moles and other sleepers in the Pak military and intelligence establishment to create internal dissension.

Once this leads to internal turmoil, it is time to activate the strike teams who will launch rear area attacks on installations of economic and military value. This will lead to further conspiracy theories being floated, leading to political uncertainty. The risk that this entails is that it will weaken the democratic process and possibly lead to military rule in Pakistan, but that is a contingency that India has to prepare for. The aim of strikes is to create a situation where the establishment is caught in an over-reach situation. The rear areas, which are under the administrative control of Pakistan, but given its tribal and ethnic composition are quite independent, can be suitably engaged by India for its own purposes. Strikes will mean deploying more police and para-military troops to these regions and will stretch the Pak establishment.

Surprise and timing are an important element in these missions and those in the strike formations should be constantly on the move, working from small towns, crowded market places and religious places. Rear area operations are to succeed by strikes in a few important cities and installations of economic value such as oil fields and tankers. Karachi city and its port is an example. Period of operations will depend on the nature of Pakistani response; if they do according to plan then teams can be exfiltrated. If they need to be in for some more time, then further deception plans need to be put into operation.

The duration of operations in most cases is stretchable. The first phase may take anything between one and three years, while the second phase will be carried out in synchronised fashion for a month or two in one place and then move on to another target. After a respite of a few months it will be time to carry out operations again. The long-term objective is to build information networks in Pakistan that will provide a human intelligence source for India and additionally it will help us make inroads into the military establishment and bureaucracy.

Along with the strike missions carried out by the second team, plans may be made to carry out heliborne operations and SF strikes in the border regions against militant

training camps and other suitable targets. Forces for this are already available in the form of the National Security Guards and Indian Army para-commandos. These can be configured and trained for operations in a near-war like situation or simultaneously with the covert strike missions outlined above. All this of course requires a national security policy that seeks to engage and contain Pakistan in foreign policy terms.

To aid this process and to improve intelligence gathering on Pakistan the above covert action plan is commended to the Indian decision-maker and political leadership. The Indian diplomatic and security response to Pakistan sponsored terrorism has often been to fight fires within after the incidents have taken place. Additionally, there is a dialogue track, which seeks to engage Pakistan in a meaningful bilateral exchange. But little thought is given to the possibility of engaging in covert operations on a scale suggested above and its usefulness as a tool of diplomacy. The intention as stated above is not to help the disintegration of Pakistan but to engage Pakistan in a battle in which the key players, the army, ISI and bureaucracy will get embroiled to an extent that it creates conditions for, first Pakistan's disengagement from the sub-continent and second, may help the process of bilateral dialogue.

NOTES

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13. Point made by B Raman former additional secretary in the cabinet secretariat who read a draft of this paper.

14. B Raman. Was there an intelligence failure. *Frontline,* 30 July 1999. pp.117-119.

15. The Federation of American Scientists. site can be accessed at www.fas.org\irp\world\index.html. This site on world intelligence organisations cites Pakistani sources as saying that RAW has 35,000 agents operating in Pakistan.

16. Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman. *Every Spy a Prince.The Complete History of Israel's Intelligence Community.* Houghton Mifflin Company. (Boston, Massachusetts 1990). pp.144.